UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS TEXAS 75202-2733

March 24, 2006

AMENDED FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

To All Interested Agencies and Public Groups:

In accordance with the environmental review guidelines of the Council on Environmental Quality at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the requested design change of the proposed project to change the primary borrow site to a new sand source and to repair a small breach near the eastern end of East Island under the authority of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) of November 1990, House Document 646, 101st Congress (Public Law 101-646).

Proposed Project: New Cut Dune/Marsh Restoration Project (TE-11a/TE-37) in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana.

Sponsors: U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR)

Background: In 1974, Trinity Island was breached during Hurricane Carmen, creating what is known as "New Cut". Subsequent storm events widened the breach in 1985, and again in 1992. Trinity Island and East Island were replenished from the CWPPRA projects TE-20 and TE-24. Also, long-shore sediment transport connected the islands by a narrow barrier spit which is susceptible to breaching during storms because of its low elevation. The elevation of the New Cut dune platform is 3-4 feet, while the elevation of the Trinity Island and East Island is 7-8 feet.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) documents for project TE-37 were issued for public notice on January 10, 2001, and a Statement of Findings (SOF) was issued on April 17, 2001. It has now become necessary to change the project from that originally proposed because of issues concerning the use of the Wine Island Shoal borrow site. The sponsors have determined that the use of material from alternative borrow sites and the Ship Shoal area would cause the approved construction budget to be exceeded, and that there is a potential borrow site in the Gulf of Mexico, located approximately three miles south of Wine Island in South Timbalier Block 9 and Block 10. Additionally, the present changes will repair a small breach on the eastern end of East Island near the Stone Energy platform.

Proposed Project: The proposed project would restore approximately 8,000 linear feet (l-ft) of barrier island between Trinity Island and East Island, using approximately 830,650 cubic yards (cy) of sand, 7,500 l-ft of containment dike, and 17,050 l-ft of sand fencing. The present changes will use 970,000 cy of beach fill and 4,400 l-ft of sand fencing. Portions of the fill area have naturally accreted towards the design elevation of +4.0 NAVD88 (North American Vertical Datum of 1998), reducing the extent of the gulf side berm. The western end of the island near California Canal was included in the design template. Additional details can be found in the design report and the final plans and specifications.

Impacts Associated with Project Change. The New Cut Dune project area was converted from a subtidal to an intertidal habitat through natural processes. Part of the area was removed from the original project footprint due to long-shore sediment transport, periodic wash-over events, and the existence of established vegetation. The proposed project will result in a decrease of intertidal habitat by 47 acres (ac), which is about 13 percent of the pre-construction intertidal habitat for both East and Trinity islands. The present changes will increase the intertidal habitat by 29.5 ac. The total effect of both areas would be a net decrease of 17.5 acres of intertidal habitat, a net increase of 6.3 acres of supratidal habitat, and an increase of 78.2 acres of dune (see Table 1).

Although the project will decrease the intertidal habitat, if the project is not constructed, a high probability exists that storm impacts will destroy the 92 acres of intertidal habitat currently existing within and north of the project areas. This project will fortify and stabilize the area around New Cut to protect the remaining intertidal habitat.

Finding. The EPA has performed a review of the environmental information submitted with the request to amend the project design, and has determined that the proposed changes are consistent with the original determination that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted, and the orginal FNSI is herewith amended. All conditions cited in the original FNSI and SOF is incorporated into this amended EA to address any concerns over potential impacts to Essential Fish Habitat and to the wintering and nesting populations of piping plovers in the project area.

This preliminary Amended FNSI will become final 30-day after issuance of the public notice if no new information is provided to alter this finding. No administrative action will be taken on this decision during the 30-day comment period. Copies of the Amended FNSI and requests for review of the Administrative Record containing the information supporting this decision may be requested in writing from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733, or by telephone at (214) 665-8150.

Responsible Official,

Rhonda Smith
Chief
Office of Planning and Coordination

Enclosures:

Table 1: Habitat Classification
Figure 1: New Cut Dune/Marsh Restoration Project TE-37
Figure 2: Location of Proposed Borrow Area

Table 1: Habitat Classification

Habitat	New Cut Project Area Footprint			East Island Breach Area Footprint*	Combined Projects Area
	Pre-Construction Acres	Post-Construction Acres	Net Acres	Net Acres	Net Acres
Intertidal	71	24	-47	29.5	-17.5
Supratidal	85	74	-11	17.3	6.3
Dune	4	62	58	20.2	78.2
* Pre-Construction Acres: There are no Intertidal, Supratidal or Dune habitat in the East Island Breach project footprint. Post-Construction and net acres are therefore the same.					

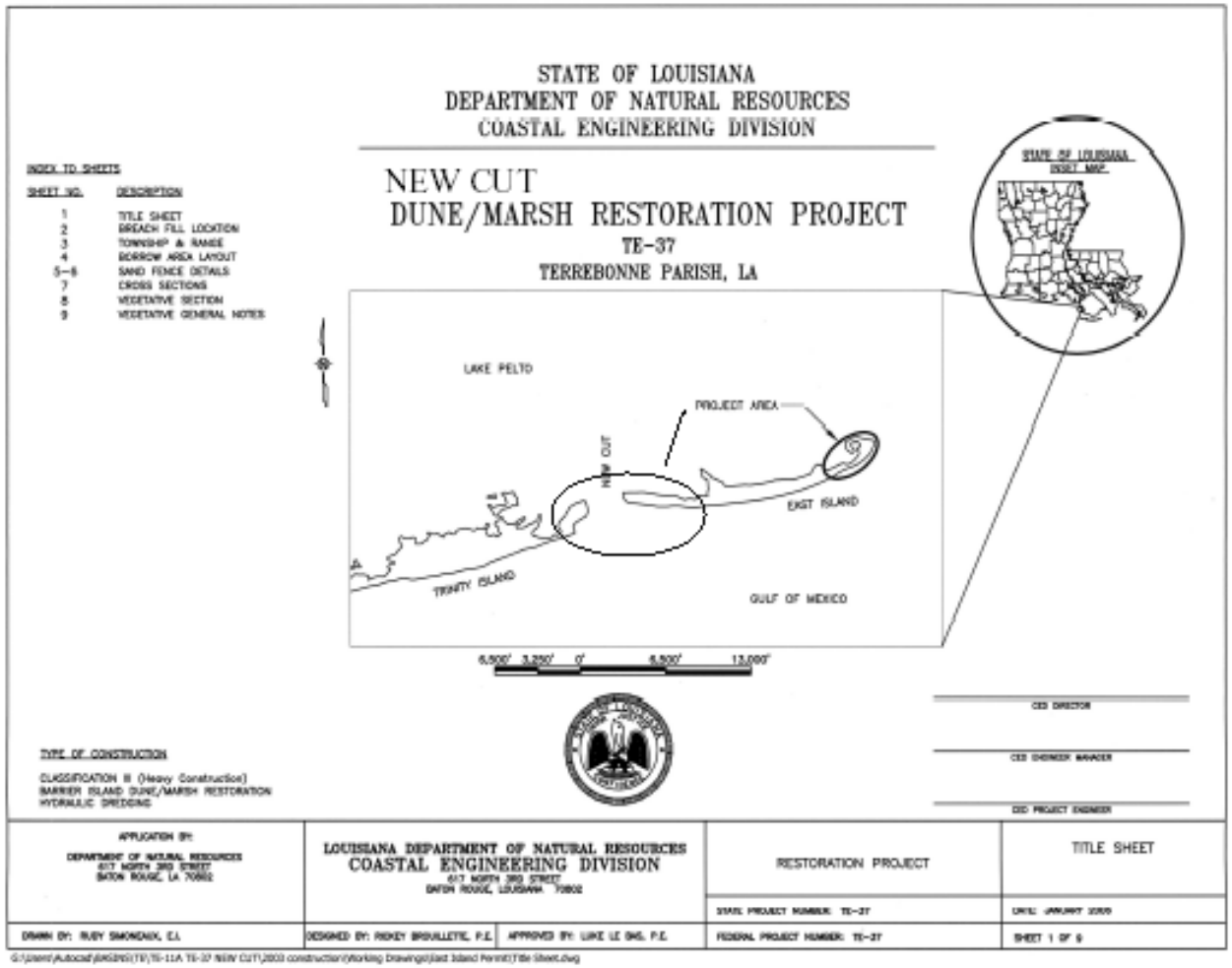

Figure 1: New Cut Dune/Marsh Restoration Project TE-37

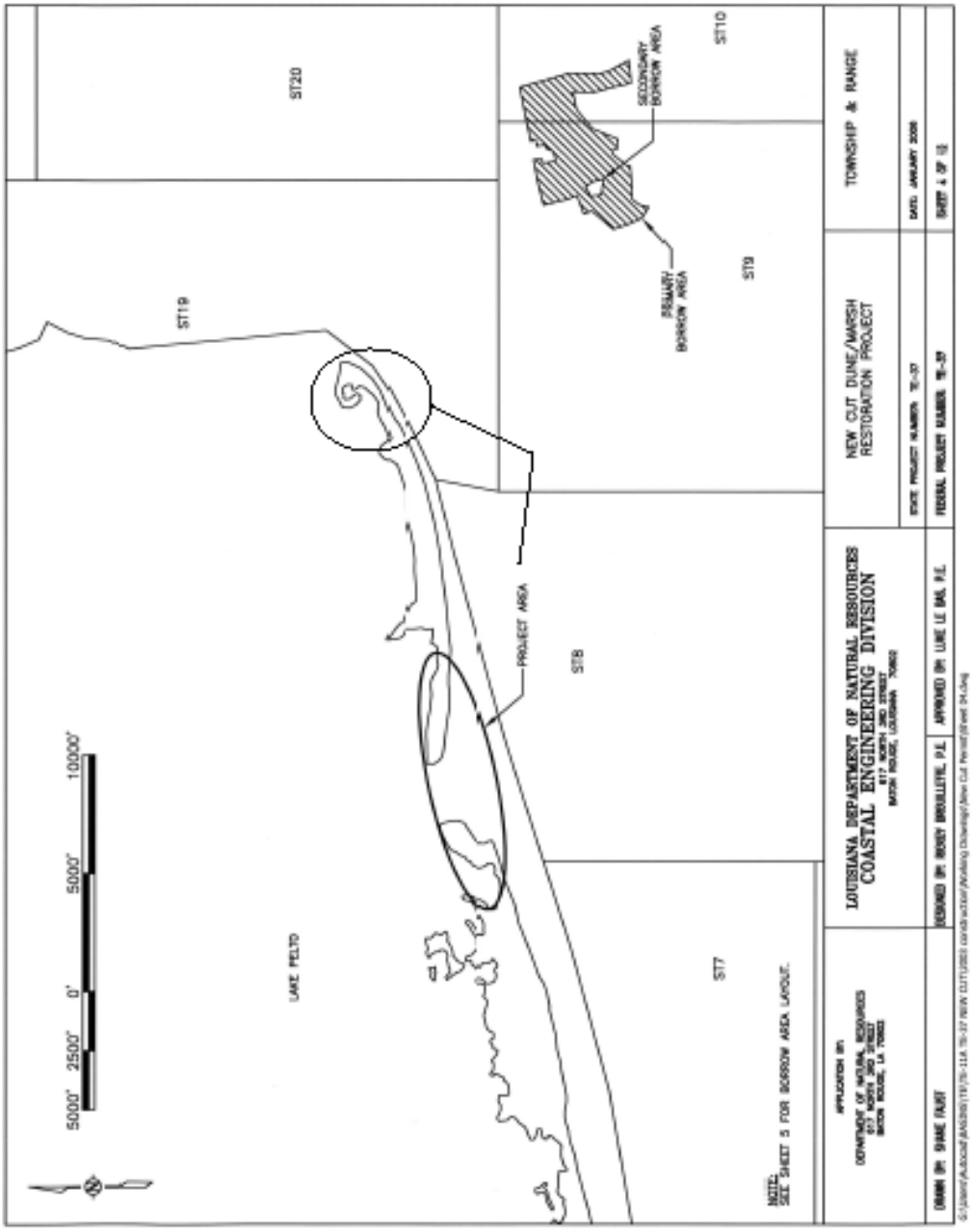

Figure 2: Borrow Area Layout New Cut Dune